

□ 1830

Mr. HERGER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON).

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, I just want to start off by thanking my good friend CHARLIE RANGEL, the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, for bringing this legislation to the floor. We have talked to a number of the countries involved in the preferences, and they were very concerned.

So, CHARLIE, I want to thank you for bringing this to the floor at this time. I wish it was for a longer period, but 8 months, as has been said by Mr. WELLER, is a good start.

The one issue that I would like to mention, and it has not been addressed, and that is creating jobs in Central and South America helps us with our immigration problem. We are going to be talking about illegal immigration here in a couple of weeks or a couple of days maybe. I don't know when the Senate is going to send it over. But the fact of the matter is where there is poverty, where there are no jobs, where there is conflict, people leave and the people in Central and South America, obviously, would come north to the United States. We have a very serious immigration problem right now. In 1986 we tried to solve it. It didn't work. We gave amnesty then. It won't work now. But one thing that will help and will work to a degree are trade preferences and free trade agreements, CHARLIE, and I hope that you, as chairman of the Ways and Means, will look with some favor on some of the free trade agreements when they come up later on. I think it helps not only their economy and our economy, but it also helps with the illegal immigration problem in the long run.

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I yield the balance of my time to the chairman of the committee, Mr. LEVIN, and ask unanimous consent that he be allowed to control that time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York?

There was no objection.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to yield 3 minutes to the honorable gentleman from New York (Mr. ENGEL), who chairs the Western Hemisphere Subcommittee for Foreign Affairs.

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend from Michigan for yielding to me.

I rise today, Mr. Speaker, in strong support of H.R. 1830, which extends trade preferences for Peru, Colombia, Bolivia, and Ecuador. I want to thank Chairman RANGEL, the dean of the New York delegation, and Chairman LEVIN for their leadership on this issue.

I am the chairman of the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, and as chairman, I believe that the extension of the Andean trade preferences is crucial in promoting development in the economically and politically fragile Andean region while

also supporting essential U.S. geopolitical goals. My ranking member, Mr. BURTON, just spoke and gave very good reasons why this should be supported. I agree with every one of them.

With anti-Americanism on the rise in the Western Hemisphere, I believe that positive engagement with the Andean region can both improve our image abroad and help us to more effectively engage our neighbors. Many of our neighbors in the hemisphere feel a huge sense of neglect from the United States. The extension of the Andean preferences is a great way to show our neighbors that we are engaged and do indeed care.

I believe that the preference program has been enormously successful, having created hundreds of thousands of jobs in the Andean region. Every job created in the Andean region is another potential illegal immigrant remaining in their home country. Without the extension of these preferences, these jobs, which are in sectors that do not directly compete with U.S. jobs, will be eliminated.

I am also in possession of a letter from the AFL-CIO which gives its approval of these agreements.

Moreover, I feel that without the extension of ATPA, many of the unemployed in the Andean region would turn to drug cultivation after they lose their jobs. The Andean preference program was originally created not only to support economic development in the region but also to divert illegal coca manufacturing toward legitimate industries. Using these trade preferences as a tool in the drug war is still very important today.

Mr. Speaker, let me conclude by mentioning that President Bush recently traveled to five countries in the Americas in an effort to reinvigorate our partnership with our friends in the region. Prior to his trip, President Bush said that "The working poor of Latin America need change, and the United States of America is committed to that change." I believe that the extension of ATPA can help bring this well-needed change to our friends in the Andean region.

I want to emphasize that in my travels in the region, the region feels that the United States is looking elsewhere and is not engaged. The worst thing we could do would be not to pass this because it would prove their fears. We need to pass this. We need to do it quickly, and I urge Members on both sides of the aisle to support this.

Mr. HERGER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3½ minutes to the gentleman from Washington (Mr. HASTINGS).

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my friend from California for yielding me the time.

I have to say that I stand here in opposition to this bill, and I am one that generally supports fair trade liberalization efforts. I believe that when properly structured, trade agreements can benefit all parties involved. But, Mr.

Speaker, the Andean Trade Preference Act is not a trade agreement. This is an agreement to give access to the U.S. market in return for reduced drug production by certain Andean countries. Let me repeat that, Mr. Speaker. This is an agreement to give access to the U.S. market in return for reduced drug production by certain Andean countries.

The original idea may have been a noble one, and it probably still is, but the Act has proven to be a failure, and as a result, American asparagus growers have paid the price. In practice, the Andean Trade Preference Act has resulted in higher South American drug production and a steep loss of acreage and processing of asparagus in the United States, as reflected by this chart where in the last 16 years the amount of acreage has been reduced by 50 percent.

A recent International Trade Commission report found that asparagus was the domestic commodity most negatively affected by the Act. Unlike other sectors, American asparagus growers were not provided a transition period before tariffs on Peruvian imports were unilaterally eliminated. Since implementation of the Andean Trade Preference Act of 1991, imports of Peruvian asparagus have increased by more than 20 times. These duty-free imports have decimated U.S. asparagus growers and closed domestic asparagus processing plants in my district.

Now, perhaps, Mr. Speaker, if you are not from an asparagus production area in this country, you may be thinking this trade-off is worth it because it results in less drug production. The unfortunate reality is that this Act is a failure in that regard too. The latest studies confirm that cocaine production in the Andean countries is actually higher today than when the Andean Trade Preference Act was adopted in 1991.

In other words, we have exported jobs from rural America to these Andean countries and we are still seeing narcotics production going up. Nevertheless, we are here asking American farmers to sacrifice their livelihoods to perpetuate a wholly unrelated and unsuccessful anti-narcotics strategy.

Mr. Speaker, I also regret that we are considering an extension of this flawed policy under a process that denies Members the opportunity to amend the bill, the text of which was not even available until a couple of hours ago. This is being rushed to the floor with no time to debate or offer amendments. The markup of this bill in Ways and Means was cancelled. The bill has not gone through the Rules Committee. The House should have an opportunity to have a full and fair debate on this Act, which has a profound negative effect on my constituents.

So I ask my colleagues to oppose this bill.

I will insert into the RECORD an article from the Seattle Times that more fully points out the dilemma that asparagus growers have suffered, and,